

INTERNATIONAL

Paper in English of the Worker-communist Party of Iran

March 93, No.2



Fundamental characteristics of the Worker-communist Party

The political and economic situation in Iran

**Worker-communist Party of Iran communiqué
on recent developments in Afghanistan**

In support of Afghan workers in Iran

Is Gulf heading for another war?

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INTERNATIONAL

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Fundamental Characteristics of the Worker-communist Party

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The following text is the translation from Farsi of part of the speech given by Mansoor Hekmat at the first cadres conference of Worker-communist Party of Iran. This conference was held in early May 92. The following extract was published in Farsi, in International, the paper of the Worker-communist Party of Iran no. 2, June 92.

What forms the basis for our unity as a trend and a party? From which general premises do we derive our concrete answers to questions facing communism today? I think in the course of the past few years we have said and written enough about our differences, as worker-communists, with other tendencies within the Left. So, here I shall only touch upon those features which, in my opinion, characterize our movement politically, and form the political bases of the Worker-communist Party of Iran (WPI).

1- The objective social character of worker-socialism

A central point that we consistently emphasized throughout our debates of recent years is that worker-socialism is an independently existing social movement and not a derivative of the activity of Marxists or communists. It is an historically initiated, ongoing movement. The struggle against capitalism with the aim of replacing it with socialism, through a working-class revolution, is a living and firmly established vision within the working class - it is a living tradition of struggle. The theory or the self-consciousness of this movement may, at any given period, be accurate or inaccurate, right or wrong. Nevertheless there always exists a current within the working-class movement that aspires to, and constantly tries to, push the entire class in this socialist direction.

Our first distinctive point of departure is, therefore, that we see socialism, communism, the worker-communist party, as taking shape in the context of such a real and objective struggle by the working class, be it at times weak and limited in scope, that is always in motion in contemporary society. Socialism is not a model, a Utopia or a profound design for society, only waiting for us socialists to implement it. It is not an arbitrary design, or a prescription exported from the realm of reason to the realm of practice. Socialism is, first and foremost, a framework for a certain social struggle that is being waged inevitably and independently of the presence or absence of a party; ... a social endeavour that has continued nearly throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, and is still, today, clearly observable.

Clearly, different social tendencies try to influence this movement, this class endeavour, and guide it in the direction of their own visions. Nevertheless the working-class struggle against capitalism and for social equality, lurks underneath whatever cover other social movements or parties try to wrap it in. This movement can be distinguished from other movements in contemporary society by its general social goals, by the substance and focus of its protest within the present society, and by its socio-class origins. ... There is always a part of the working class who are not content with a defensive struggle, who do not believe they can get what is truly theirs within

the framework of the present system, who think capitalism should give way to socialism, who believe that the bourgeoisie must be dispossessed of the means of production, and, finally, who believe that to achieve all this it is necessary to unite and make a revolution. This is nothing but the very definition of worker-socialism.

Even behind the activities of right-wing trade unions, behind the words of local labour leaders, however naive and timid such words may be, we recognise certain facts pertaining to the *socialist* tendency and the *socialist* struggle of the working class; facts that many radical Left tendencies are essentially unable to see. For right-wing illusions within the working class are acquired, but the anti-capitalist tendencies, tendencies that force labour leaders to speak up, are intrinsic and genuine. Worker-socialism is the tendency within the class which creates radical leaders, and maintains the constant pressure of radicalism on non-radical leaders.

To recognise and emphasise, therefore, the existence of an objective, socialist endeavour within the working class itself, notwithstanding the intellectual expression it might find in different periods, is one of our important characteristic features as a current and a political tradition. We see beyond the daily activities of the workers' movement, the objective existence of a socialist strand within the working class and believe that communist organisation must develop in the context of this real, social tradition of struggle.

The party we are forming today belongs in this tradition, and not in the tradition of the Iranian radical opposition, or the radical Left at large. The social and political origins of this party are not to be found in the struggle against monarchy,

against the Islamic regime, against dictatorship or imperialism. This party is formed in the tradition of workers' struggle for economic equality in society - a socialist struggle that has been constantly waged in capitalism - and only in there does WPI seek the source of its power and strength.

2- Internationalism

This is another characteristic of our tradition. Not only our world-outlook but also our political practice has an internationalist basis. It is evident, already today, that those who have the slightest liking for the concept of "the fatherland", including that spectrum in the Left who, on those rare occasions when they speak of workers and their demands, still refer to them as "the workers of our fatherland", should not and will not join this party. Nationalism has a strongly negative sense in our tradition. Today, we speak of nationalism and patriotism with such a tone that would have been inconceivable for the Iranian Left 10 years ago.

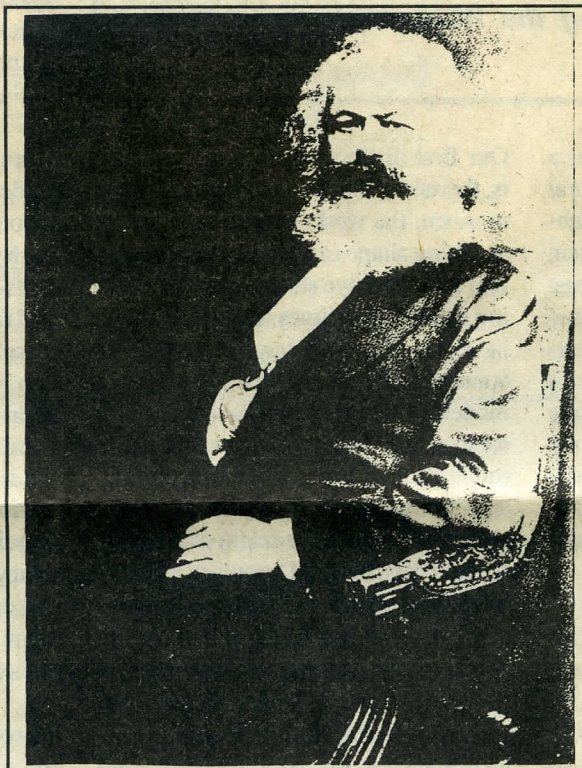
The Worker-communist party has no nationalistic sympathies whatsoever. We speak of mankind and then we speak of workers. These are valid concepts for us. We don't see as valid any other division and classification of the human population that may fall between the two. We do of course demand, and fight for, the abolition of every discrimination based upon various divisions and categorisations of humanity; but these divisions do not, in themselves, form the point of departure for our political work and political organisation. We have not arisen from any national struggle, we do not recognise national and state boundaries in our political and agitational work. The class struggle, everywhere, is the focus of our activity. ...

We pursue a world strategy. And in Iran,

where we have direct involvement and influence, we pursue, as part of that world strategy, a more direct and more comprehensive political programme of action. ...

3- Socialism as the final objective

... Socialism has been defined and interpreted in lots of different ways. We are one of the few currents who emphati-



cally maintain that socialism should be identified with abolition of wage-labour and creation of economic equality between people. It means equality in the status of people in the social production.

This clearly distinguishes us from all those currents who identify socialism with planned state economy, with industrialization, or with redistribution of wealth, etc. We maintain that socialism requires the abolition of wage-labour, and the transformation of the means of labour, means of production, into the common property of society. Social welfare and economic security of people can only be the result of such a revolution in the economic foundations of society.

4- Marxist world-outlook and criticism

This party is being formed in the Marxist tradition, and in defence of Marx. Worker-communism, in my opinion, will not get anywhere without Marxism. Defending Marx and Marxism, as a social critique, is a distinctive feature of our tradition.

There are a good many people these days who perhaps want to retain their Left parties, to stick around in the political scene as socialists, but, at the same time, reckon that in order to do so one should primarily modify or revise Marxism. Such as, for example, trying to bring together, "democracy" and "market" with Marxism and socialism. As far as we are concerned, these are worthless absurdities...I believe the main bulk of those who abandon Marxism are people who had accepted it in the first place, not as a critical, enlightening outlook, but as a fashionable school of thought that had imposed itself upon them. A great many of them are people who had been using Marxist terminology as a wrapping for views and social aspirations alien to Marxism. Until very recently the world was swarmed with such

Marxists.

I believe Marx's social criticism is indispensable for worker-communism and the worker-communist party. And I personally see as one of our major differences with most of the tendencies within the workers' movement their neglect of Marx and the Marxist critique.

We are the *Marxists* of the workers' movement. We should challenge the non-Marxist traditions in the movement. We should criticise, from a Marxist standpoint, the way they explain the condition of the working class, the society, the economy, the state, religion, the political regime, etc. This is a funda-

mental objective of our traditions and our party that worker-leaders should become Marxists.

5- The causes of the historical non-success of worker-communism

Our account of the history of the socialistic struggle of the working class, and of the causes of communism's failure so far, is itself a characteristic and distinctive feature of our tradition.

The question every communist should answer today is, "Why did all this happen? Whatever happened to communism?" Many have already come up with what they regard as answers. The tell us: "Marxian theory was wrong", "Leninism was a false contribution to Marxism", "socialism, in general, has always been a Utopia; it's not practicable", etc., etc.

In response to explanations of this sort, or, rather, in explaining the conditions of communism today, we put forward a totally different argument. We say what in practice came to a deadlock was another social and class movement; a movement that had no kinship, except in name, with socialism, with Marxism, and with the social movement of the working class. What we are witnessing today is the defeat of a certain pseudo-socialist social movement that emerged in the twentieth century and was expressed and represented by the ruling parties in the Eastern bloc and its various pseudo-socialist offshoots, supportive or critical of the mainstream, outside that bloc. Indeed, this collapse requires careful analysis in its own right. But what we have to explain is the ineffectiveness so far of the socialist working-class movement as distinct from this bloc.

The creation of this bloc had detrimental effects on the socialist working-class movement. In fact, it was erected as a monument to the defeat of the latter. The revolution of 1917 was the product of our movement. But, we were defeated in the Soviet Union; not today, but a long

time ago. It was a *long time ago* that we were defeated there, were forced into isolation, and lost the vast influence we enjoyed both within the workers' movement and in the international politics.

So, if we are asked today, "why communism reached nowhere a century and a half after Marx?", our answer will be: the bourgeoisie inflicted a serious defeat on us in the aftermath of the 1917 revolution; a defeat we have not yet been able to recover from. It was, therefore, the *rise* of the Eastern bloc (and not its fall) that brought about the defeat of worker-communism. ...

In my opinion, the communist movement of the working class has [since then] always existed alongside the official communism; and that's exactly why we should use, instead of the word "communism" which brings to mind this official, non-proletarian stream, the term "worker-communism" in order to refer to our own class movement...

We are able to explain the reasons for our own historical defeat. We are able to show why bourgeois movements borrowed the slogans and the language of our movement. We can explain why and due to which weaknesses and shortcomings, our movement was defeated by nationalism in the experience of the Soviet Union. We can explain what the social bases and objectives of this false socialism were. And, today, we can explain why this dominant pole was itself ultimately defeated, and so on.

As worker-communists, we do not recognise therefore the crisis of the official pole of communism as the crisis of worker-communism, and consider this a view that distinguishes us from other tendencies. Our own problems, our own isolation, our own inability to meet the challenges of the contemporary world, and so on, are much older. As I said, the rise of the Soviet Bloc was itself an indication of the isolation of our social movement. Our response to the present-day situation is therefore not to revise the theoretical and practical principles

of our class movement, but to intensify our efforts.

Allow me to add here a personal comment on a question about which other comrades may have different views. I do not, by any means, regard the victory of this worker-communist movement as inevitable. I don't even regard its growth as inevitable... The protest of workers against capitalism is, of course, inevitable. But no one can claim that this protest will inevitably occur under the banner of worker-communism - as a movement with a particular political and economic vision and strategy. I do not believe in this inevitability; and it is for this reason that the *conscious choices* real men and women make at various stages, and the *actual practice* of different movements in different junctures, is, to me, vitally important. If we are to make any advance, these choices and practices have to be correct and communist. Living people and living generations of the working class decide the fate of socialism and communism.

The victory of socialism is not an inevitable and pre-determined outcome of history. Perhaps in the 19th century the actual options open to the bourgeoisie seemed limited in the eyes of socialists at the time and so they could have wondered "what the bourgeoisie could in the end really do to avert the pressure of the vast exploited class?" Today, however, the bourgeoisie is capable of physically destroying the world, they can render it barren, they can see to it that the people are in such dire need of bread and oxygen that socialism does not even cross anybody's mind. A modern slavery could just as well be the destiny of the world, at least for several generations.

In short, the issue here is the fate of a definite movement: the socialist working-class movement. The cause of the present state of affairs, the cause of the survival of capitalist barbarism thus far, is that this movement was defeated at some critical turning point in contemporary history. We were defeated in the

experience of the Soviet Union; a defeat which conditioned the fate of the world for many decades. We were not properly represented, neither intellectually nor politically, in the fateful controversies that took place in 1920s over the post-revolutionary course of the Soviet economy. We were not prepared in advance for that challenge. None of the leaders of the socialist movement of the Russian working-class entered that period with a clear economic vision, and thus no resistance was organised, from the standpoint of worker-communism, against the advance of nationalism and the bourgeois economic vision... We did not succeed in keeping our class force under our own banner. For we practically lacked, at a decisive stage and with regard to a cardinal question of the post-revolutionary era, [i.e., the question of the economic content of the October Revolution] any independent banner, or programme...

Now our future too depends, in the same way, entirely on the actual practice of our movement and its activists; on what they do, and what visions they have and hold out to the workers' movement. If we do it right, it will work out; if we don't, it won't. There is no historical inevitability here! ...

6- Revolution and reform

Another, and in my opinion very significant, trait of our political tradition is the way we see the relation between revolution and reform. The radical Left has always typically remained isolated from actual social movements for reforms and has been, therefore, scorned by the activists of these movements. The more "radical" a Left tendency has been, the more isolated it has become, and the more incapable it has remained of influencing the social circumstances of its own time. It seems as if maintaining one's political integrity, or remaining radical in one's programmatic ideals, has stood in inverse relationship to gain-

ing actual strength and influence. Revolutionary ideas appear incompatible with effective action. The truth is, I think, that such a contradiction has actually existed in the thinking of the radical Left. For them, Marxism is merely a theory, and not a social movement that ought to express itself in various practical dimensions.

It is characteristic of our tradition, however, that its communist revolutionism is not only compatible with its daily activity to bring about improvements in the conditions of the working people, and in the economic, political, cultural, and judicial state of affairs in society, but

To democratize this or that industrial trade union in America, for example, is a fine job. But, a worker-communist should also confront the leaders of such a movement with questions such as: what's going to happen in the end, say, in thirty years, *after* the union has hopefully been democratized? What do you think of communism and Marxism? What alternative do you have for the reorganization of society? How, in your mind, can workers' total liberation be finally brought about?

is inseparably *connected* to it. We see people and classes not as politically static and shapeless but in constant struggle to improve their society and their own living conditions. No communist can ignore this actually existing struggle and at the same time call for a revolution that apparently stands independent of it.

The question of the relationship between revolution and reform, and hence the relationship of the revolutionary element with movements and organisations geared to social reform, is one of the main pillars of our outlook. For us, this question is a source of a series of programmatic, tactical and practical conclusions. Issues such as the relation of workers' revolution to numerous movements for liberty and social justice that emerge within the exist-

ing society with narrower objectives, the attitude of the workers' party towards unions, the relation between our revolutionary programme for society and our immediate demands in various areas, the issue of legal and underground work, etc., all hinge on a certain understanding of the relation between revolution and reform.

However, understanding the significance of the struggle for reforms is not identical with getting dissolved in reformism. It is true that without getting involved in the current protests in society the revolutionary communist element within the working class is bound to remain marginalised and unable to effectively influence the working class as whole. But it is equally true that without explicitly representing socialism and workers' revolution within the working class, the worker-socialist tendency would not only fail to get anywhere near its revolutionary objective, but would also leave reform movements captive within the limits of short-sighted bourgeois visions and policies...

It is not enough for us to appear, and be recognised as, a sincere and active current in the workers' protest movements, as a current that is a participant, and, indeed, part and parcel of these movement. This would prove our distinction from the esoteric radical Left. Our communism, however, begins at the point where we appear in these movements, that is, within our own class, as a current critical of the non-socialist currents, as a current that pursues a more fundamental cause and a more radical change, as a Marxist current that propagates a particular view within the class...

Supporting trade unions and having close relationships with their Left wing, strengthening the labour movement as a whole against the bourgeoisie, is a vitally important task. But, we must scrutinize, as communist workers, the vi-

sions, the policies, and the views of working-class organisations and their leaders. To democratize this or that industrial trade union in America, for example, is a fine job. But, a worker-communist should also confront the leaders of such a movement with questions such as: what's going to happen in the end, say, in thirty years, *after* the union has hopefully been democratized? What do you think of communism and Marxism? What alternative do you have for the reorganization of society? How, in your mind, can workers' total liberation be finally brought about?

The radical leaders of the workers in America, Canada, Germany, Britain etc. should be confronted with the question as to why they are not communists; why they have nothing to say and nothing to do concerning the economic foundations of the present system, the state, religion, the educational system, the equality of sexes, the war drive of the Powers, and so on, and so forth. We do not criticise the sectarian isolationism of the non-worker Left only to bow, in the next step, to the vocational and equally isolationist attitudes of the reformist workers' movements, and to their alienation from the general cause of the working-class social revolution. We are that tendency within the working class which sees the working class as capable of, and duty-bound to, extensive intervention in economic, political, cultural and intellectual life of society. We want the worker to emerge as the force that presents the whole human society with a real alternative. We regard socialist vision, theory, social critique, unity for social revolution as vital; just as we regard wage rise, unemployment benefit, the right to strike, and organising to bring about improvements in the economic and political condition of the working classes as vital. Each one of these aspects expresses a different moment in the life, the struggle, the self-assertion, of the working class; aspects that we regard as indivisible and indispensable. We must criticise all social tendencies, working-class or otherwise, which break apart this whole and keep

workers away from the social revolution and the social revolution away from the workers.

7- The party and the class

Another characteristic of our current is our understanding of the relation between the party and the class. Our party is the party of a certain tradition of struggle within the class itself. Its relation with the working class is thus based on the relation of that tendency within the class with the working class as a whole. This means, firstly, that it is not a party formed by a number of social reformers for the salvation of the working class, but one formed by a part, a tendency, within the working class itself with the aim of uniting and leading the whole class towards its class objectives.

...

Secondly, it is therefore, clear that the worker-communist party is not the party of "all workers" irrespective of their outlook and their social and political aims... In other words, it is neither a party derived from a preconceived idea or theory that is now being held out to the working class nor a party of all workers regardless of their social standpoint or outlook. This is the party of the socialist workers who put forward a more fundamental and comprehensive critique of the present system.

We consider ourselves not a political party outside the class, but the party of a critical tendency, with a definite social outlook, within the class itself. It is therefore important for us to confront other tendencies within the class theoretically, politically, and ideologically.

8- The council movement

With regard to general forms of organisation for working-class struggle, we belong in the council tradition. We are a party advocating councils as the main form for organisation and direct action of worker masses; and it is from this standpoint that we deal with other forms of workers' organisation...

If a current is really part of the class and seeks to unite and organise it, it can reject other forms of organisation and demand the workers to abandon those forms, trade unions for example, *only to the extent* that it is itself able to point to an existing alternative for the workers to join... If the council movement has established itself firmly enough to be capable of undertaking those aspects of the defensive struggle which are at present organised by the trade unions, then it would be quite correct to ask workers to leave the unions and join the councils and the council movement... Otherwise, if such an alternative is practically not open to workers, then it would be a clearly anti-worker move to undermine the unions. Our attitude towards trade unions cannot be of the same sort as our attitude towards religious or state institutions.

In a certain sense, this is related to what I said earlier about the significance of reforms and the relation between revolution and reform. Trade unions safeguard, in one way or another, certain social reforms and working-class gains. They are organisations for winning and protecting reforms. One can imagine that today, in the absence of better organisational alternatives for the working class, what wretchedness would come to prevail in the world if there were no trade unions.

We endeavour to build and strengthen the council movement within the working class. And as we progress we call upon workers to join this alternative. We recognise the value of unions for workers' struggles in the absence of strong councils and council movements, but we do not abandon our independent critical views *vis-a-vis* trade unions.

....

Interview with Reza Moqaddam about:

The political and economic situation in Iran

This interview was first published in Farsi, in International, paper of the Worker-communist Party of Iran, no. 2, June 92. Here we publish excerpts from this interview.

International: With the fall of the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence by its southern republics, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IR) now sees an opportunity and a glimmer of hope to take a more influential role in the region. The active diplomatic relations which the IR has established with these republics, the economic treaties it has signed with them, and the emphasis it lays on Islam as the dominant religion in the region are all parts of its attempts to gain a commanding position in the area. Can these changes help realize the old ambition of the Iranian bourgeoisie to become the major regional power?

Reza Moqaddam: The balance of power and the security system in the region, which now also includes the southern republics of the former Soviet Union, have changed and a new order is taking shape. Both Iran and Turkey are now trying to implement their own plans; they are trying to grab a greater share of what is left of the defeat of state capitalism in the Soviet Union.

The fall of the Shah in Iran brought forth the question of which country could assume the role of the dominant power in the region. The Iran-Iraq war which was supposed to resolve this issue did not provide a solution and the matter was left unresolved. After Iraq's defeat in the war with the USA and its allies, Iran was left without a rival. The only thing Iran needed now was the recognition of its role and power in the Persian Gulf by the USA and Europe. Thus, Iran

tried to coax the west to see Khomeini's death as the end of Pan-Islamism and to recognise Rafsanjani as the representative of Iran's attempts to distance itself from its previous foreign policy objectives. In this respect the IR relied on its [west-friendly] position during the Gulf war and its pledges to free the western hostages in Lebanon. Although the west welcomed this change in position, it nevertheless refrained from recognizing the IR as the dominant power in the Persian Gulf. Whilst excluding Iran, the western powers tried to form a regional security pact with the participation of the Gulf states and the deployment of the Syrian and Egyptian military forces in these countries. The Iranian government opposed the plans. It tried to show that it is not a threat to the western interests and that it only objects to the "presence of the foreign forces", i.e. the Syrian and Egyptian military presence in the Gulf. For a multitude of reasons, among others Saudi Arabia's and Kuwait's refusal to allow these military forces on their soils, the plan did not go any further and thus the question of power in the region remained unresolved.

On the other hand, after the events in the Soviet Union, Turkey, which was once NATO's "cordon sanitaire" against Soviet expansionism, was on the verge of losing its strategic importance for the USA and Europe, and with it its prospect of becoming a member of the European Economic Community. Once demands were raised that pressure should be put on Turkey to resolve its differences with Greece on the question of Cyprus, which

is still one of Europe's unresolved questions and which was in the past pushed aside for the sake of Turkey's role in the anti-Soviet front, Turkey was alarmed of its shaky position in the post-Cold War NATO and Europe. To maintain its position, Turkey did everything which was asked of it during the war between the USA and Iraq...

Meanwhile, important developments took place in the Soviet Union. Republic after republic announced its independence and this animated the expansionist ambitions of both the Iranian and Turkish bourgeoisies...

At the moment the rivalries and frictions in the region are between Iran and Turkey, on the one side, and Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, on the other. The present relations within the bourgeoisie of the region have raised new questions and issues, with each state trying to resolve these to its own advantage.

Turkey lays the emphasis on Pan-Turkism, on its common roots with the nations of the Turkish-speaking southern republics of the former Soviet Union and on the fact that it is a Muslim country with a secular government and constitution and a market-oriented economy. Turkey enjoys the support of the USA, Europe and Russia. The joint American and Turkish investments in these republics are the winning cards in the hands of Turkey against its rivals.

Iran, on the other hand, puts the stress on a combination of Islam, Iranian nationalism and these republics' common history with Iran within a single country.

It should also be mentioned that Turkey's emphasis on the national identity of these republics and its instigation of

nationalist tendencies among the people of the region, have worried Iran enormously. Beyond this propaganda Iran sees the danger of, for instance, the [Iranian] Azarbaydjan province seceding. Iran's involvement in these republics and its attempts to establish close relations with them, especially with the Azarbaydjan republic, is a pre-emptive move on its part to prevent any manifestation of national questions in Iran.

In any case, the Islamic Republic pursues its prime interests in the gaining of domination in the Gulf. Its involvement in the southern republics of the former Soviet Union should not be seen as a distraction from the pursuit of its interests in the Gulf. Indeed, whatever gains it achieves from these republics it will use to promote its domination in the Persian Gulf.

What it will all lead to in the future is difficult to predict, but Turkey has the upperhand in these rivalries. The Soviet republics need economic aid, foreign investment and technology more than anything else, and Turkey is more capable than Iran in providing them. The USA, Europe and Russia, too, are helping to consolidate the position of Turkey rather than that of Iran.

Now to the second part of your question. Firstly, the USA has no control over the events in this region. The USA did its utmost to consolidate its ties with Russia. It was only when the question of nuclear arms sales from Kazakhstan to Iran was raised that James Baker toured these republics, among other things to prevent them from any such sale to Iran.

Secondly, after the end of the war with Iraq, the Islamic Republic is determined to return to what the west calls the "world community". What remains to

be resolved is the terms which are agreeable to both sides. In the absence of such an agreement, both sides try to impose their conditions on each other. Thus any moves to bring the parties closer, inevitably occur in an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust which at times has

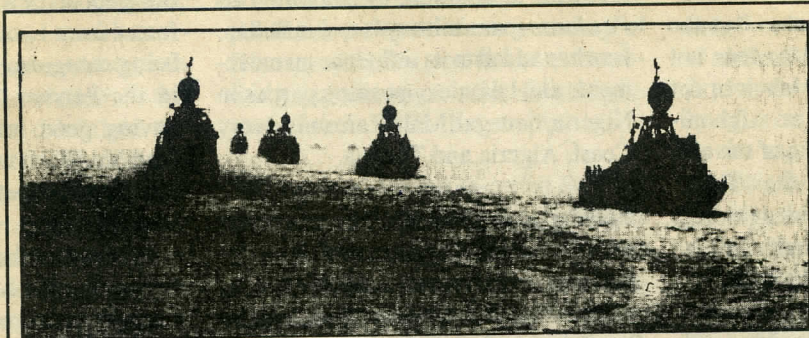
of power in Afghanistan... based on these developments, do you think the re-emergence of Pan-Islamism in the region is likely?

Reza Moqaddam: The west has made it clear that it will not tolerate Pan-

Islamism in the region. With the changes that the Soviet Union has undergone during recent years even the anti-communist character of Pan-Islamism no longer appeals to the west. The developments in Iraq revealed how the west stood against the public opinion which it had itself built against Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime, and broke its own

"pledges" to its allies in the Iraqi opposition in order to prevent the Hizbullah and Pan-Islamism from gaining power.

Pan-Islamism is the political policy of the Hizbullah in the Iranian regime. The weakness or strength of this policy depends on the balance of power within the different factions of the ruling Islamic regime. With the weakening of Hizbullah's grip on power in Iran and the fact that one of the basic objectives of the ruling faction of the government in its foreign policy is to gain the "sympathy" of the west, the IR's appearance in the former Soviet republics is no longer Pan-Islamic. What's more, to remove any suspicions which the west might have about the aims of the IR in the region, Iran has sent its ally, Ayatollah Hakim, the chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, to Saudi Arabia in order to negotiate and reach agreement over the future of Iraq. In addition, among the six republics, only the republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have substantial Islamic parties and movements, the majority of which demand the separation of religion from the state. In these republics the emphasis is rather on national identity and nationalism than on Islamic iden-



Iranian warships on exercise in the Persian Gulf.

"The Iranian government's attempt to buy arms and its interventions are its means of imposing itself on the USA and the west as the superior power in the Gulf region"

forced the parties to wage a psychological and propaganda war against each other. The west is aware of the fact that Iran needs capital and that it is prepared to sacrifice everything except its ambition to become the supreme power in the Gulf. It therefore uses this fact as a lever to bring about its own desired political changes in the Iranian regime. The Iranian government's attempts to buy arms and its interventions here and there are its means of imposing itself on the USA and the west as the superior power in the Gulf region.

International: The Islamic Republic's attention towards the southern 'Muslim republics' in the former Soviet Union is not just limited to religious propaganda. The IR now talks explicitly about finding a place in the New World Order. In view of the uncertainty about the future of the Third World, including the Middle East and Iran, after the end of the Cold War, the fact that there is no established model in the region, and the rise of the fundamentalist Islamic currents in the new independent republics, the Islamic currents' electoral victory in Algiers, and the Mujahedin's seizure

tity.

The taking of power by the Mujahedin in Afghanistan has certainly helped Iran's influence and power in the region. It is true that reactionary Muslim forces have consolidated their position in Afghanistan, and for instance made the wearing of veil compulsory and banned the consumption of alcoholic drinks. But the world public opinion rightly does not consider this a victory for Islam or for Pan-Islamism. [The war in Afghanistan] was one of the aspects of the war between the "West" and the "East" whose outcome was not decided through the war between the Mujahedin and the Afghan government. If being anti-US is part of the definition of Pan-Islamism, the new rulers - even the Fundamentalist Gholbadin Hekmatyar - are completely pro-US. Even if the Mujahedin movement could have been formed without US support, it would not last long without such support. What's more, all the efforts of the USA and the west are now directed to bringing to power the non-"fundamentalist" forces in Afghanistan.

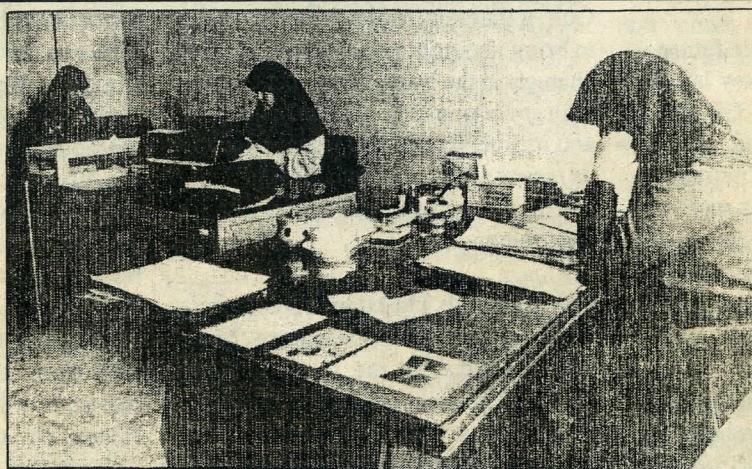
Thus the possibility of Pan-Islamism becoming a power in the region is remote. However, there is the possibility of Islamic movements and Pan-Islamism growing in Africa. The IR is now trying to use its influence on these forces to impose its own conditions on the west and the Arab countries in the region. Forming close relations with Sudan is one such example. Sudan was ostracized because it did not join the anti-Iraq front during the Gulf crisis. The Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, then stopped their financial aid to Sudan. To receive financial assistance and also to provoke the Arab coun-

tries Sudan accepted Iran's conditions for the granting of aid, thus demonstrating to Egypt and Saudi Arabia that it could strengthen Iran's power in the region. In this way the IR also got closer to southern Egypt, which has cities with strong Islamic movements, as a response to Egyptian efforts to gain a foothold in the Gulf. In addition, by stationing its *Pasdaran* (paramilitary force) in Sudan, Iran has added to its influence on movements and Islamic opposition parties in Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Algeria and Tunisia.

International: It is said that as a result of the policies pursued by the Rafsanjani faction the social and legal pressure of the religious laws in Iran has been reduced. For example, the pressure on women to observe strict Islamic wear [*Hejab*] has abated, there are discussions on the limits to the state's interference in people's private lives, the execution of the Retribution Laws has been limited as a result of the international pressure on Iran to observe human rights, and

How have the necessities of the government's new economic programme made these retreats inevitable? How far is the Islamic Republic prepared to go in terms of giving up the religious laws?

Reza Moqaddam: Let me first say something about the withdrawal of the *Pasdar* forces from Lebanon. Iran's chances of being recognised as the superior power in the Persian Gulf is determined by having good relations with the west. And one of the west's conditions in this was the ending of the hostage affair. The hostages were released. However the withdrawal of the Hizbullah forces from Lebanon goes back to the agreement reached between Syria and the USA during the war with Iraq. In exchange for Syria's participation in the anti-Iraqi front, the USA agreed to recognise Lebanon as a sphere of Syrian influence. Thus, Syria demanded the consolidation of the authority of the central government in Lebanon and that of the Lebanese army, and got down to dismantling all the paramilitary forces.



"The extent to which women observe Hejab has become in Iranian politics a measure of the authority of Islam over society, and this is not something that the Islamic Republic is prepared to relinquish that simply"

there is now a brisk market for the sale of videos and music tapes. As far as the foreign policy is concerned, the Hizbullahi *Pasdars* have been withdrawn from southern Lebanon, etc.

excluded Iran, Iran accepted to call back the *Pasdar* forces from Lebanon in exchange for the Syrian recognition of the right of the Islamic Republic to take part in any security pact related to the Gulf

Syria and the organisation of Amal had tolerated the presence of Islamic Republic's *Pasdar* forces in Lebanon because of the good relations that existed between Iran and Syria in the past. With the end of Iran-Iraq war the main reason which had held together the costly friendship between Iran and Syria - Iran's sole Arab ally - disappeared. At a time when the USA had included Syria in its regional security pact in the Persian Gulf and

region. Thus the removal of the *Pasdar* forces from Lebanon had nothing to do with the Islamic Republic compromising its stands on Islam and Pan-Islamism. This is proven by the fact that the government has since then sent its *Pasdar* forces to Sudan.

In carrying out its economic plans the Iranian government is prepared to remove all the legal obstacles which interfere with the movement of capital - this also being part of the conditions put forward by the IMF and the World Bank. Rial's different exchange rates will be unified by the end of March 1994. The government will pursue its policy of abolishing subsidies, to the extent that the social and political consequences of this policy could be controlled. One of the latest measures in this regard was the removal of all the restrictions on the share of foreign capitals in a project. According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic the maximum share of foreign capitals in a project is less than 50%. The government is determined to sell all the nationalized industries and banks to the private sector by March 1994. All state industries have been given the go-ahead to sell their shares through the stock market. In addition, state foundations such as the "Deprived and Martyrs Foundation" and the "Martyrs Foundation" have already begun selling their shares. There is even talk of selling a part of the oil industry. In the process of exercising this policy some of the industries confiscated during the revolution are now being returned to their original owners...

But the state interference in people's private lives and the question of Hejab are not issues which directly affect the movement of capital. In fact these things have played an important role in consolidating the rule and dictatorship of the Islamic Republic. These laws limit the possibilities of attracting experts to run the industries. To eliminate this problem, the government is prepared in practice and to some extent to turn a blind eye to the breaching of these laws - as it has done up to now.

Therefore the government will retain these laws, so that it can use them at any time to maintain its position. It is not surprising that every time the IR wants to assert itself it starts by attacking the violation of the Hejab laws by women, by turning loose its Hizbullahi gangs on the streets. The extent to which women observe Hejab has become in Iranian politics a measure of the authority of Islam over society, and this is not something that the Islamic Republic is prepared to relinquish that simply.

The gains which the so-called *Resalati* faction made in the last round of Majlis [Islamic Assembly] elections will make the repealing, or even the practical limiting, of these Islamic laws harder to achieve. This faction which sided with Rafsanjani during the elections, will support the policies of Rafsanjani's cabinet in areas of foreign policy, relations with the west and the elimination of legal hindrances to the movement of capital. This is the faction which was against any statutory limitation in the working hours in the Labour Law. When it comes to Islamic laws on individual and social rights, the *Resalatis* are even more reactionary than the Hizbullah faction. Therefore, it is all the more likely that we see more severe actions to control Hejab, non-governmental newspapers, and the programs broadcast on state radio and television networks, etc. Whether that section of the Iranian bourgeoisie and middle class which is pro-Rafsanjani, i.e. favours an easing of restrictions in society, will overcome the *Resalati* faction, is open to speculation. However, since the outcome of this conflict has significance for the degree of direct foreign investment in Iran and also for the success of the government's economic plans, the Rafsanjani faction has a better chance of winning.

The Islamic Republic would change these Islamic laws and traditions only to the extent that they could be replaced by a system that does not jeopardize the security of capital and its own rule. Right now, however, considering the government's economic policies, whose

social and economic consequences are a source of worry to the government, we should expect more severe repression on the part of the Islamic Republic.

International: The government claims that as a result of the five-year plan the economic growth has been more than what was anticipated, and that they have managed to attract the bulk of necessary capital and credit. Let's say it is true, but with the vast markets in eastern Europe and in the former Soviet republics now open to western capital, do you think this would be a lasting process? How does the changed world situation affect the economies of Third World countries like Iran?

Reza Moqaddam: The world is faced with a shortage of capital. However two points must be differentiated here. One is the receipt of loan and credit, and the other is direct foreign investment. The reason why capital has not reached Iran to the extent desired by the Islamic Republic does not just have to do with the general shortage of capital in the world. I will return to this point later.

In view of the experience of the debtor countries in the '80s which were not even able to pay back the interests on their loans, the IMF and the World Bank have now become much more cautious in giving loans than during the '70s. However, Iran is an exception. Iran is one of the few important countries which has oil and is capable of repaying her debts. This is the most important advantage of a country asking for loan. However, there are political considerations that stand between these organisations and Iran. They want to take advantage of Iran's need for capital in order to introduce their desired changes in the Iranian regime.

The rapid economic growth of the past two years could be foreseen, provided that the facts and figures to substantiate this analysis were those of the end of the Iran-Iraq war and not the years 1976-77. During the war, industries lacked spare parts and raw materials, and factories

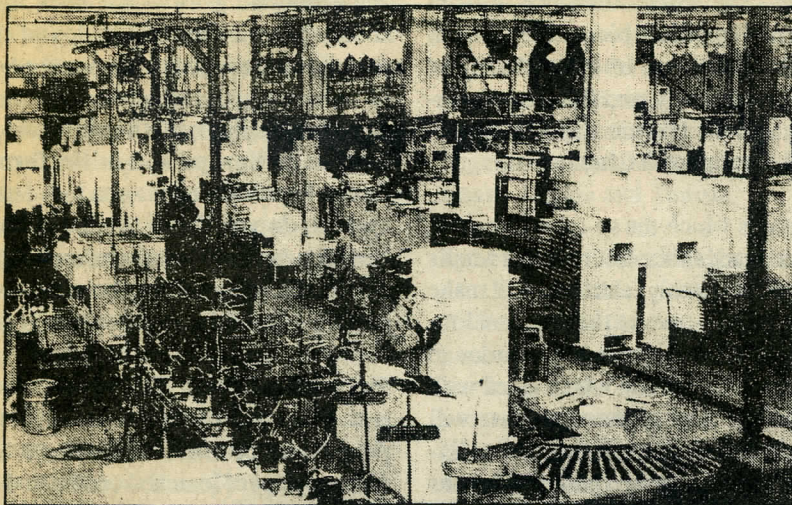
worked at 30% their nominal capacity, as the revenues from the sale of oil essentially went into financing the war effort. Today the industries have increased their production to their nominal capacity or even above that level. So

can only manoeuvre within the boundaries of this framework. For example, Iran's population, the domestic market, its military might and the degree of influence which it exercises in regional political issues all play effective roles in

capital in the region, and this will certainly lead to frictions. Militarily, Iran tries to swiftly become the major power in the region. 50 billion dollars have been earmarked for military expenditures in the five-year plan, most of which will be used to buy arms. This is something that has greatly worried the west. They fear that in the absence of an established pattern, which would determine Iran's role and position in it, Iran is rapidly being armed, and that then imposing a role on the Islamic Republic despite its wishes would be troublesome. The USA tried unsuccessfully to make Yeltsin limit or repeal the arms deal signed between Iran and the Soviet Union at the time of Gorbachev...

The world capital shortage heightens the competition between different countries for attracting greater capital. Governments are now facilitating the conditions for foreign capital investment in their countries, which means none other than guaranteeing security for capital and provision of almost free labour power, i.e. conditions which can only be achieved through dictatorship and suppression...

We must consider one important issue here. Unlike past decades, capital export does not lead to an expansion of markets. If, for instance, General Motors in the past decades opened a factory in Iran this would mean the creation and expansion of unexploited markets. But now capital has conquered the whole world and there is fierce rivalry in the already divided markets for the sale of products. In many sectors supply exceeds demand. One of the ways of surviving in this competitive arena is to cut the cost of production, which in practical terms means cutting wages, workers' insurance, etc. So at the moment these capitals are not moving to other countries to expand the sales market. Rather, it is the factories that are transferred from one place to another. For example, factories in the USA, Canada and Europe are closed down and re-opened in Mexico, Eastern Europe, etc. Employers openly say that if the workers do not accept



"Today the industries have increased their production to their nominal capacity or even above that level"

the economic growth claimed by the government is none other than the fact that industry has now closed the gap between its actual output and the output capacity allowed by the infrastructure, which may be called the stage of setting off the production. The whole question now is to go beyond this phase. To maintain this rate of growth depends on the factors of capital, the economic infrastructure's capacity to absorb capital and the human factor in production (experts and skilled workers), which may be called the stage of development and reinvestment. Here the important question is the development model to be adopted, the choice of which is beyond the ability of the Islamic Republic alone and is dependent on the position which the Middle East and Central Asia (especially the former southern Soviet republics) occupy in world economy and production in the post Cold War era. The determination of this position by the world economic giants also determines the extent to which, the conditions under which and the sectors in which foreign capital is invested in Iran. Iran

Iran's share of these investments. Until such time, foreign capitals will be invested mainly in joint venture with the government and in infrastructural sectors such as steel, transport, electricity, oil and communication. All the Iranian government's efforts in the past few years to reconcile with the west, and at the same time impose its domination on the region, shows its connection here with the Iranian economy and its share of foreign capital in the region. Since there is no established economic model, and the world order after the Cold War is in the process of formation, Iran and Turkey are earnestly competing with each other to play a greater role in drawing up the future profile of the region.

This competition is mainly in four areas. Economically, Iran tries to pull its economy together as fast as possible. Politically, Iran strives to add to its influence in the events of the region. As far as its rapprochement with the west is concerned, Iran has done its utmost to get the best possible share for Iranian

company terms they would transfer the whole factory to another country. This is what workers in the USA and Canada are facing. This situation has pushed the trade unions to envisage an international perspective for the workers of the same trade, which in turn has increased the grounds for international cooperation between workers. If wages in Mexico become similar to those in the USA and Canada, then factories would not be moved.

International: The extent of poverty, unemployment and insecurity in Iran has reached such levels that even the government, which claims that their economic plans have been successful, is unable to deny it. It is said that 90% of the population is living under the poverty line. This has obviously led to protests. We have seen the oil workers' strike and other protest actions recently. Do you think these movements are signs of the start of a new wave of workers' struggle?

Reza Moqaddam: Economic recovery, at least in the short term, does not necessarily mean an improvement in workers' and people's economic situation... Even the government itself warns against forming any other expectation. The economic policies of the Rafsanjani faction have made the restarting of the economy dependent on people's impoverishment.

With the devaluation of Rial, the lifting of certain restrictions on imports by the private sector, and the abolition of state control over prices, the economy in Iran became active and output increased. This was followed by a steep rise in prices and a sharp fall in the purchasing power of the working class and people. The number of people living under the poverty line, even with the government's own definition, has multiplied. This situation cannot last for long, because it undermines the movement of capital itself. Commodity production does not complete its cycle until it has reached the consumer. When 90% of the people are living under the poverty line and cannot afford to buy the commodities,

either production must be reduced or people's purchasing power should be increased - among others through cuts in prices. Reduction of output would return the economy to the same point which these policies were supposed to move it beyond. This is the dilemma the Iranian economy will be facing in the near future.

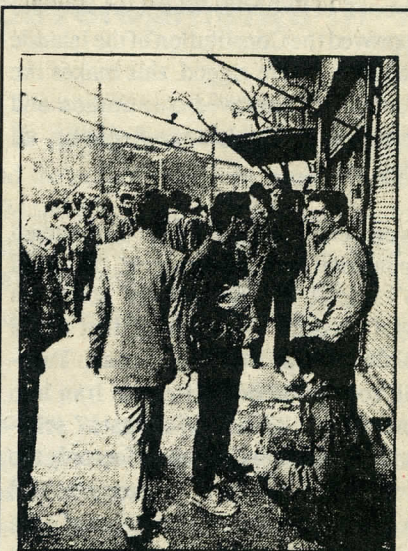
I believe we shall be seeing a new wave of workers' struggles. The government no longer enjoys the ideological tools and excuses it once had. It can't any more attack workers' struggles, which are now mainly for wage hikes, under such pretexts as "Islam and the country are in danger". The oil workers passed a resolution in their meeting last winter where they declared that they would not surrender to such excuses any more.

Workers have no other choice than to struggle when faced with such intolerable hardships. For example, during the past years the decision by the Supreme Labour Council to increase wages diminished workers' struggles, although workers were not satisfied with the amount. But this year, for the first time workers protested against the proposed increase and demanded a review. This

demand was so significant and popular among the workers that even the censored newspapers could not avoid giving it coverage.

However, the problem does not end here. The government's economic policies will have much effects on the workers' movement. I cannot go into the details now. For example, these policies have made unclear the future of the Islamic Councils at the workplaces. The idea behind these councils was based on a system of collaboration between "government, management and Islamic Councils" against workers at the factory level. For this reason the Islamic Councils were formed mainly in state-owned factories. One of the unsolved problems of the government (as employer) was how to create harmony between two of its organs, i.e. the management and the Islamic Councils as a complementary part of the management. The government has always tried to convince management to tolerate the Islamic Councils and to compromise with them. Also, the government intends to sell state-owned factories by the end of March 94. This will involve fundamental changes in the way they are run. For example, the managers appointed by the new owners will not be put under any pressure to accept the Islamic Councils. In this respect the whole existence of these councils, which anyway are unpopular among workers, will be questioned and the question of workers' organisation (of course, initially at factory level) will come forth. The capitalists will certainly try to go through these changes without workers' involvement, but they will find it hard to prevent their impact on the intense discontent which exists among the workers.

International: The end of the Cold War, and with it of the bi-polar world which existed before, has also led to changes in the opposition of the Iranian government. The bourgeois-liberal opposition has high hopes for the government's new economic programmes and believes that the government would inevitably be forced



The economic policies of the Rafsanjani faction have made the restarting of the economy dependent on people's impoverishment.

to resort to measures which would promote democracy and establish a multi-party system in the country. On the other hand, the left opposition, too, has been affected by these changes. What is your assessment of the situation of the opposition (both left and right)? What future is there for the opposition?

Reza Moqaddam: Along with the world developments in recent years, the Iranian opposition parties, too, are undergoing changes to adapt to the new era of class struggles after the end of the Cold War. However, many parties have not gone through this adaptation process completely and have failed to clarify their social necessity even for themselves - something that is the condition of the effective existence of any party. The Mujahedin which is the only main force in the bourgeois opposition to demand the overthrow of the regime is among these organisations. They tried for nearly ten years to gain the acceptance of the west, but their chances diminished when the west decided to get along with the Islamic Republic and change it from within. Aware of this, a few days after the ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war, the Mujahedin tried to assert itself through a major [military] gamble which turned into a fiasco.

At the moment, we see above all a confusion in the political lines between the organisations, and new major political tendencies are developing within the opposition. One of these tendencies is a kind of liberalism which tries to accommodate itself with the new post-Cold War situation. With the flexibility it has shown in its attitude towards the monarchists, this tendency is going to become the major tendency within the bourgeois opposition of the Islamic government. This tendency which holds that the big powers are for the establishment of democracy and the upholding of human rights in the world, tries to observe their rules of the game.

Iranian liberalism is not represented by the National Front any more and is in the

process of acquiring a new mould. Its composition has changed and is not confined to any particular organisation or party. In its center lies the National Republicans of Iran. Unlike the '60s and '70s in Iran when liberalism used to lose its activists to the left, liberalism has now attracted some of the ex-Marxists and leftists. The Democratic Party of Iranian People which was formed by some of the ex-leaders of the Tudeh Party, and the organisation of Fedayeen-majority are, with some reservations, on the fringes of this new liberalism.

"Free elections" is the central political strategy of this new liberalism and its economic policies are not far off from those of Rafsanjani's cabinet. As part of the ruling class, they want their voice and opinion heard for the running of the country, i.e. they want democracy for the ruling class and regard free elections as a means of bringing them to this goal. Of course, what opportunities and advantages this democracy for the ruling class has for the working class is the subject of a separate discussion... They are also against violent actions and revolution against the Islamic Republic...

This liberalism argues that because the first round of the elections for the Council of Experts - which drafted and approved the Constitution of the Islamic Republic - were rigged, this makes the Council, its approved constitution and consequently the Islamic Republic, all illegitimate...

Even before being allowed as the legal opposition to the government, they used to criticise the government solely on legal grounds - something that could easily be disproved by any court. Turning corruption in elections in Iran into something like the "Watergate" scandal is simple-mindedness; a fact only too clear to its presenters. "Watergate" led to the resignation of Nixon based on a social (legal, political and economic) structure which existed for over two centuries. In the absence of such a structure, it does not make any difference for capital and the west who is right in this legal argument. The important issue for

them is who (in power or in opposition) is capable of controlling Iran and preventing a revolution...

The truth of the matter is that the economic policies of the Rafsanjani faction have received a growing support within the Iranian bourgeoisie, because none of the bourgeois opposition organisations has an economic alternative. The bourgeois opposition claim that their policy for running the country guarantee the "securing of international cooperation for the reconstruction of Iran" (i.e. would ensure the import of foreign capital to Iran), and guarantee the "confidence of industrialists", which are exactly what the economic policies of Rafsanjani aim to do.

Liberalism has differences with the Rafsanjani faction when it comes to the kind of changes necessary, but they all agree that the changes should be carried out in a controlled way and from above. Satisfied with the guarantees given so far by the Iranian government, the class base of the liberalism outside the country have begun returning to Iran in order to lend a hand to Rafsanjani and his policies. They are striving to restart, or reclaim, their businesses in Iran, trying to become once again active members of the Iranian ruling class in the economic field, after many years. Their political representatives try likewise to win the approval of the government for legal political activity.

The important issue is that changes desired by Rafsanjani and the liberals can be controlled and carried out from above only up to a point. It was the profound need of Iranian economy and society for a change which brought Rafsanjani and his policies to power, pushing aside the Hizbullah faction. Now if the control of this change itself becomes an obstacle to its realisation, then it would bring the working class and the people onto the arena. This would change the whole format of the problem, and we would find the Rafsanjani faction and liberalism standing against the changes that are needed in the society... The social power of the

left lies here, and liberalism which is aware of such an outcome is trying to bring about the changes from above without the working class's and people's intervention. The ultimate political perspective of liberalism is to maintain the foundation of this very class society and endeavour to control it in a secular way.

Under the impact of the events in the Soviet Union and in the world, the Iranian left, too, has undergone considerable changes, with most of its organisations and parties turning to the right. The Tudeh Party and the Fedayeen-majority Organisation have finished as left forces. With the downfall of state capitalism in the Eastern bloc countries, all the pro-Soviet organisations have lost all aspects of their strategy (political, economic, etc). During recent years, they tried, along with Gorbachev, to assimilate within their system the notions of "democracy" and "adjustment

of the centrally planned economy" which produced different results. The leadership of Fedayeen-majority turned to writing letter to Reza Pahlavi, son of the late Shah. Others sided with the liberal forces, signing with them joint declarations. And some, insisting on their own versions of Marxist theory and political radicalism against the Islamic Republic, are busy trying to find a new ideological identity for the left.

The old radical and non-worker left has lost its social relevance. The only social left current which can survive is the worker-left, whose power is a function of the influence and power of the Iranian working class in the future political developments of the country. The most important development in the radical left happened in the Communist Party of Iran which was the biggest and most powerful radical-left party in Iran. In contrast to the general trend in the world

where socialists and lefts capitulated to nationalism and reviewed their programmes in favour of non-worker and bourgeois tendencies, the politburo of the Communist Party of Iran, the majority of its central committee members, cadres and members left the party in favour of communism and in order to form the Worker-communist Party of Iran. At a time when the bourgeois mass media portrays communism as a thing of the "antiquity", the Worker-communist Party of Iran emphasizes communism, and its aim is to bring to the fore the working class in economic, political, social and ideological struggles under a socialist platform and for setting up a workers' state. The formation of the Worker-communist Party of Iran is at the same time an attempt to guarantee a place for the representation of workers and socialism on the Iranian political scene.

Worker-communist Party of Iran communiqué on recent developments in Afghanistan

The fall of the Najibullah government in Afghanistan after the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the end of the Cold War, the end of the war between the Mojahedeen and the west and the pro-Soviet regime, and, finally, the coming to power of a provisional Islamic government, have all created a new situation for the working people of Afghanistan.

The new government in Afghanistan came to power through the plan and support of the US government and its allies, after the forming of an alliance between a section of the previous regime and the leaders of some factions of the Islamic Mojahedeen. The provisional government's souvenir for the people of Afghanistan from the outset has been, on the one hand, compulsory *Hejab*, enforcement of reactionary Islamic codes and the denial of every democratic right, and, on the other, the waging of war between

the different Islamic groupings and the prolongation of the state of insecurity for the people. The war, massacre and devastation resulting from the conflicts between the different Mojahedeen groups, which have turned Afghanistan more and more into a war-ravaged country, have also brought about an unbearable situation for the working people. Just during these few months of its taking power, the provisional government has demonstrated what a grim and miserable life it has prepared for the people of this country.

By its declared commitment to Islamic laws, to the preservation and consolidation of the capitalist and pre-capitalist relations, and by fanning the flames of war and bloodshed, the provisional Islamic government should have no legitimacy with the workers and the freedom-loving people in Afghanistan. This government - or any

other Islamic government which takes power in future elections - is thoroughly reactionary and anti-human, and any degree of increase in their power would directly and immediately work against the interests of the working people and the majority of the people of Afghanistan.

The presence of the three million Afghan workers and immigrants in Iran for the past 13 years has given the working class in Afghanistan firsthand experience of the miseries of an Islamic regime. The suppression, poverty and lack of rights due to the Islamic rule of capital in Iran during these years have taken victims from these workers too. Afghan workers must remember the bloody experience of workers and people of Iran under the rule of the Islamic Republic and must consider as their prime task to preserve their class independence, defend their hitherto-won gains and oppose religious laws and superstitions. The communist workers of Afghanistan should not allow the ruling bourgeoisie and reactionary strata to use religious and nationalist excuses as a means of denying legitimate social demands, and, most importantly, restricting the workers' struggle for their certain rights and welfare. By agitating for the common cause of workers and citizens of different nationalities and religions, the sacrificing of people in national and religious wars must be prevented. It should not be allowed that Pushto and Tadjik nationalism and tribalism become the means of

slaughtering people and pushing the working people's legitimate demands to the side.

At a time when the present tribal war in Afghanistan has brought about a new wave of emigration, the Islamic Republic is trying to deport the Afghan immigrants, or to put pressure on them to return and "join in the reconstruction of their Islamic homeland". The Worker-communist Party of Iran condemns any attempt to forcibly return the Afghan immigrants and demands full citizenship right for all the Afghan immigrants who wish to stay in Iran.

Iranian workers and communists follow the developments in Afghanistan with interest, concern and a sense of responsibility, and sincerely wish that out of these developments a more conscious and united working class, who enjoys better working and living conditions, takes shape. Any degree of improvement in the working and living conditions of the working people of Afghanistan, and any rise in their level of consciousness and organisation, will strengthen the working class and weaken the rule of the capitalists and Islamic reaction in the whole region.

Down with the reactionary Islamic regime in Afghanistan!

Long live Freedom, Equality, Workers' State!

October 92

From page 16

Is Gulf heading ...

in the joint regional security army. Of course, no one can ignore Iran which owns half of the Persian Gulf's shores." But the meeting showed not the least interest in favour of Iran's participation in the region's security arrangements. It even issued a declaration on 23 December supporting the United Arab Emirates on the three-island dispute and calling for the reversal of Iran's actions in Abu Musa and an end to its occupation of the two Tunb islands.

Through this statement, the propaganda war between the two sides reached its most intense level since the onset of the nine-month old crisis. The Islamic Republic foreign ministry dismissed the declaration as "invalid and worthless", and held those countries "responsible for the implications of such irresponsible positions". In his Friday Prayer

speech on 25 December, Rafsanjani said that the Gulf's Arab states would have to cross "a sea of blood" to reach those islands. The Islamic Republic's National Security Council said, "Iran is prepared to defend Abu Musa and Tunb islands by military force". 190 of the National (Islamic) Assembly's 270 members in a communique condemned the declaration; and the leader of the Assembly said in a strongly-worded speech, "these islands were Iranian, are Iranian and will remain Iranian".

While the Islamic Republic was using the language of war, the UAE was making contacts with Petrous-Ghali and the Security Councils's permanent members to try to solve the dispute through the UN or the International Court.

Iran has signed treaties with Sharjah Sheikdom regarding Abu Musa, but not on the Tunb Islands. The latter were

occupied by Iran with the blessing of Britain after Britain pulled its military forces out of those islands in the early Seventies. Iran in return gave up its claims on Bahrain. The dispute over these islands and Bahrain, which the Shah's regime, because of its special relationship with the West and the particular role it played in the Gulf in a bipolar world, had somehow settled, has today re-emerged under very different conditions. The Arab countries' insistence that this issue be referred to the UN, or any other international body, is because they enjoy a more favoured status (than Iran) with the West and the USA.

Will Iran agree to leave the resolution of the three-island dispute to the UN or the International Court? Will it accept their verdict, which is unlikely to be in Iran's favour? Is the Gulf headed for a new war?

In support of Afghan workers in Iran

Asghar Karimi

The Iranian government with the collaboration of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have started to deport Afghan immigrants from Iran.

The date of the start of the deportations had been fixed as December 1st. Mofidi, the governor of Khorasan province (where the refugees would be deported from), said that the question of deportations was final, and that those who refuse to return would be transferred to camps in the border region and then sent back to Afghanistan. The governor blurted out these threats in the presence of the UNHCR representative, Jean-Marie Fakhouri, who for his part thanked the Iranian government for its hospitality towards the Afghans during these years that they have been living in Iran.

A few weeks later, when it became clear for the Iranian government that the Afghan immigrants would not return, the authorities began to issue further threats of forced transfer of Afghans to the border camps and their later deportation. Mofidi has also officially called for Afghans to be refused jobs.

It is believed there are around three million Afghan immigrants in Iran. The great majority of them have been living in Iran for more than 10 years under conditions of harsh exploitation and total lack of rights. The Iranian bourgeoisie has imposed on them longer working hours, with lower wages; the Afghan immigrants have also been under all kinds of hostility and harassment by Iranian nationalism. These open attacks have in fact provided the context for the reproduction of cheap labour power for Iranian capitalists. The 'hospitality' mentioned by the UN representative is nothing other than the inhumane condition of the three million Afghan immigrants - something which the honourable UN official must regard as more than what the workers deserve.

Three million immigrants are to be repatriated to a country under the rule of Islamic Mojahedeen. After all, the kind of government that both the USA and the Islamic reaction in the region desired has been installed, and the UN and Iranian government no longer see any political advantage in the presence of the Afghan immigrants in Iran. If forced to return, the Afghans will not only face poverty and repression, but will also become victims of the bloody street battles between the reactionary Islamic bands which have already claimed many lives. Afghanistan is a war-stricken land. This is the new hell to which the three million refugees who are not needed in Iran any more are going to be sent.

From the viewpoint of Iranian workers who themselves are victims of the capitalist system, the Afghan workers are an inseparable part of the Iranian working class. They have worked, been exploited and suffered repression and humiliation *together*, and they have struggled against these appalling conditions *together*. If the Islamic Republic

succeeds in quietly deporting the Afghan workers, and if the spirit of class solidarity among the workers is weak, then the workers will be subjected to even more privations. Today Iranian and Afghan workers need a deep class solidarity.

The deportation of Afghan workers must be unconditionally condemned at workers' meetings - not only in Iran but also in other countries. The first reaction by workers to this disgraceful and inhuman act of the Iranian government and the UN should be to swarm them with letters of protest and petitions, strongly condemning their action. To defend the basic and human rights of Afghan workers as Iranian citizens, to demand an end to all discrimination against Afghan workers and the abolition of the system of blackmail by which the Islamic Republic pockets half the Afghan workers' wages, along with the promotion of class solidarity between Iranian and Afghan workers, would be the proper response of labour organisations and all decent people against this collusion. ■



Afghan workers in Iran: Hard work, low wages and now threat of repatriation

Dispute heightens between Iran and United Arab Emirates

Is Gulf heading for another war?

Reza Moqaddam

Last April Iran refused landing to a ship carrying foreign workers employed by the United Arab Emirates to work in the Abu Musa island. After three days, the ship returned to the Emirates, with its passengers still on board. After this action by Iran, the question of sovereignty over Abu Musa, and what the rights and powers of the two countries in this island are, became the subject of a dispute between them. Having promoted Abu Musa from a 'part' of Iran to its 'province', Iran at first emphasized its undisputable rule over the island. After mediation by Syria, however, which had supported the Emirates, the Iranian government softened its line, making room for negotiations.

Iran at first said it would only talk to Sharjah Sheikdom [one of the UAE sheikdoms], but then backed down and agreed to talk with the UAE itself. In a meeting held for this purpose in the Emirates, the Iranian representatives objected to the agenda as it also included the question of sovereignty over the Tunb islands. Insisting that they would only talk about Abu Musa, the Iranian representatives walked out of the meeting and left the Emirates. With the breakdown of the negotiations, which had hardly started, the war of words between the two sides flared up once again. At this stage of the crisis in relations between the two countries, Iran was willing to concede the UAE's rights over Abu Musa; the UAE, for its part, called for an end to the occupation of the two Tunb islands by Iran.

On 10 September a meeting of the six member states of the Gulf Security Council, at which the foreign ministers of Egypt and Syria were also present, through a declaration (later known as the Doha Declaration), for the first time opposed the occupation of these islands by Iran. Algeria, too, joined the Declaration a few days later. On 14 September,

the meeting of foreign ministers of 21 member states of the Arab League, held in Cairo, issued a statement urging Iran to "reconsider its position and notions, as its continued presence in the island would have dangerous consequences for the whole region". Since that time the Arab countries have tried to refer the resolution of the dispute about the three islands to the UN Security Council or the International Court



of Justice in the Hague.

The Abu Musa island does not have much economic importance, but because of its strategic position, it has a military significance. Crescent Petroleum, which has had the exploitation right of Mobarakeh oilfield in offshore Abu Musa since 1974, started operations by producing 5,000 barrels of oil a day, and now produces 15,000 barrels. The income from oil is shared between Iran and Sharjah Sheikdom. During the Iran-Iraq war, Iran used this island as its base to attack oil tankers by its fast boats. After the US war in the Gulf, Iran has been stationing there hundreds of missiles bought from China and North Korea. Commentators and analysts of the region have mentioned various causes to explain Iran's action in Abu Musa, such

as "expansionism" and "gradual annexation of the island", none of which, however, seems convincing in view of Iran's critical position in the region and the world.

Iran's action is a defensive and pre-emptive measure against the USA's "unipolar" security plan in the Persian Gulf. When none of the regional security plans discussed during the Gulf war realised, the USA chose the so-called "unipolar" plan and signed separate military and security treaties with each member of the Gulf Security Council. According to these treaties, the USA can establish military bases in these countries, and this includes that part of the Abu Musa island which belongs to the United Arab Emirates. Iran's emphasis that it has the responsibility for the security of Abu Musa and that the residence there of foreign nationals (non-Iranian or non-UAE citizens) requires its approval, is nothing but opposition to the stationing of the USA's military forces in the island. Given the existence of a military and security treaty between the USA and UAE,

Iran tried to assert, or win, a right regarding the presence of foreign citizens in the island which would then make the question of the presence of American military forces in Abu Musa redundant. This action of Iran was thus part of its attempts to have its role recognised in any Gulf security plan, or at least prevent the drawing up of any plans against it.

Before the holding of the Gulf Cooperation Council summit on 21 December, which was to discuss among other things the creation of a joint army to maintain Gulf's security, the government in Iran stated its desire to join such an army. In a commentary on the meeting, the Islamic Republic radio said, "Iran too should be allowed to take part

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International is published in its original form in Persian and Arabic.



Single issue price:

USA	050 US\$
Canada	0.50 C\$
Britain	0.30 £
Scandinavia	0.50 SKr
Germany and other countries	1.50 DM

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